

September 7, 1960

Mrs. Dorothy Chandler
32 Mainbridge Lane
Levittown, New Jersey

Dear Dot:

I had wondered whether or not my tardy letter addressed to you in England would have reached you before you began your homeward journey. When I returned to my office yesterday I found your very lovely note written aboard the Queen Elizabeth, and I was much relieved. At home Alene and I found your letter of September 2nd. We had just come back from our vacation out in Sag Harbor and were so very happy to hear from you and to have your enthusiastic and cheerful note.

You know of course how completely happy we were to learn of the fine reception that has been given you. We would have considered ourselves complete "flops" had the reverse been your experience. I know that you are going to be very happy in that beautiful setting in which you now find yourself.

I'm really thrilled about your invitation to speak to the Women's Club. I know that just by being your natural, cheerful, charming self you are going to win scores of new friends just in this particular effort. The topic you suggest "Human Relations, A Universal Subject" I think is an excellent one. I thought of a substitute that is almost exactly like your own thought namely, "Human Relations-A Matter of National and International Concern" this latter emphasis leaves the door open for a wide and intimate report of your experience in England, with such other domestic references you would wish to make. I agree with you that your basic approach in the talk should have to do with the English versus American differences and misunderstandings. I think however that it is almost essential that you weave into your talk some of the things which without doubt were expressed by your English friends, in their bewilderment over the peculiar schizophrenic personality that is the American in connection with his race and color sensitivities. I think this should be done very briefly and only marginally in illustrating some of the points of English-American differences. I would also agree with you that no racial reference to the Levittown situation be made at all, in so far as your original presentation is concerned.

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I'm sure that it will be almost impossible to avoid a discussion of the Levittown situation. Something of the sort is bound to come up in the questions that will be raised by the women if you have a discussion period; and I would recommend a discussion period. However in dealing with any of those trying issues of local relationships in the town I think your only safe ground is not to know too much about what makes people prejudice or even to discuss the meaner side of human nature but rather to stay on the safe ground of discussing human beings as personalities, everyone of whom should have the right to disclose whether his character and personality and intellect and personal habits are acceptable to people, rather than be rejected on sight before every being given an opportunity to be a human being. As you can see this can be related immediately and directly to your English experience without necessarily over emphasising the color aspect of it. On yes one other thought: there is always the likelihood when ever we meet with a group of American's, of finding one or two bigoted people in the group. Do not every permit this to disturb you because actually such a person becomes your greatest asset and aid in getting thoughts over to the entire group. The questions and comments of a bigot, if treated by you objectively, quietly and without anger or tension, provides the rest of the group with the most effective example of the stupidity and untenability of the bigots attitude. I always welcome one as soon as I spot him in a group and I find that he works to my advantage every time. I think too it would provide a feeling of comfort and moral support if you were to ask if Shirley Lippincott could accompany you to this particular meeting I would ask her not to participate in the discussion as such but just be there so that spiritually you know that you have that moral support back of you. I think the nature of your interracial relationship also would have a subtle affect upon some of the people there.

All of this suggests to me that this whole thing is going to be just perfect. Knowing you as I do and seeing that community as I have, this could not have been a more significant or propitious kind of arrangement. I am so happy that it is being done and I am so very very happy that it is you that is doing it.

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As soon as Slene and I can get squared away we will be in touch with you so that we can come down and visit with you. In the meantime the idea of teaching in Levittown is a cracker-jack idea. I would hold the matter in abeyance for two or three months then one day arrange to talk with Ira Goldman and leave the thought with him. I am sure he would be enthused with the idea, and I am equally sure that his influence is such that without a doubt it can be arranged at will. Keep this in the back of your mind. Much love.

Sincerely,

HAROLD A. LEITT, Assistant Director
Commission on Labor-Management
Organizations

HAL:bb

P. S. Under separate cover I am sending some material that may be helpful to you.